DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 070 336 FL 003 612

TITLE	French in the Primary School: Field Report No. 2.
INSTITUTION	Schools Council, London (England).
PUB DATE	[66]
NOTE	14p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Schools Council, 160 Great Portland Street, London, W 1, England (Gratis)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Curriculum Development; Educational Experiments; Elementary Schools; *Fles; *French; Instructional Improvement; Language Instruction; *Modern Languages; Program Content; Program Descriptions; *Program Design; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS	*England

ABSTRACT

This is an account of the first two years' operation of a national experiment in language instruction in England, jointly sponsored by the Schools Council and the Nuffield Foundation for teaching French in primary schools. The report discusses: (1) origins of the experiment, (2) planning the pilot project, (3) "Why French?," (4) the objectives of the pilot project, (5) course materials, (6) consultation and liaison, (7) the Schools Council Modern Languages Subcommittee "A," (8) launching the project, (9) selecting the pilot areas, (10) training the primary teachers, (11) training the secondary teachers, (12) modern language centers, (13) the spread of primary French teaching, (14) surveying the national situation, and (15) the situation today. (RL)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

FIELD REPORT No. **2**

ED 070336

French in the Primary School

An account of the first two years' operation of the national experiment jointly sponsored by the Schools Council and the Nuffield Foundation for teaching French in primary schools.

It is addressed not only to primary and secondary school teachers and local education authorities interested in improving and co-ordinating the teaching of French but also to everyone concerned with ensuring the advance of language teaching in Britain, whatever the language and at whatever stage.

FL 003 612

THE SCHOOLS COUNCIL

38, BELGRAVE SQUARE, LONDON, S.W.1.

The Primary French Pilot Scheme

Origins of the experiment

The pilot scheme for the teaching of French in primary schools was launched in March, 1963. It is not relevant in the present context to try to trace, in any detail, the factors which led to its establishment; to anyone concerned with the teaching of modern languages in Britain, the change in attitude towards the usefulness of language learning and the growth of new techniques and of a technology of language learning have been obvious enough. Among the more immediate factors was probably a growing sense of unity with our European neighbours. Thus the Annan Committee,[1] reporting in the spring of 1962, drew attention to the potential benefit for language learning in Britain if the regular teaching of a first modern language were started in good conditions and by the right methods in primary schools.

In Britain itself, contributory factors no doubt included the spread of audio-visual methods of language teaching in secondary schools, and the support by the Nuffield Foundation of pioneering experiments in language teaching at the primary level in Leeds and elsewhere in 1961 and 1962. The experiment in Leeds was particularly striking, even though it was undertaken in special conditions. A class of about twenty 11-year-olds of fairly high ability was given intensive instruction in French by a French bilingual teacher, Mrs. M. Kellerman (now language adviser to the West Riding L.E.A.). In the space of one term the children achieved remarkable results in fluency and precision of speech.

This particular experiment could be said to have highlighted the question of introducing the learning of a modern language to children in the primary school, although there were a number of other experiments being conducted at the same time in individual schools locally around the country. (The well-founded experience of the preparatory schools in teaching languages to younger children has also to be remembered).

Planning the pilot project

Encouraged by the success of the Leeds experiment and by the interest which it had aroused, the Nuffield Foundation began discussions with the then Ministry's Curriculum Study Group about the establishment of a pilot project. The Foundation were already concerned with other curriculum development work, having commissioned three development teams to work on the preparation of new 'O' level courses in science. Similarly, in the Ministry, the Curriculum Study Group had undertaken a review of modern language teaching in England and Wales with a view to sponsoring development work.

In July, 1962, the Nuffield Foundation identified four possible components for an integrated project: fundamental linguistic research into langugage learning; the development of new forms of teacher-training courses; the provision of new forms of examination; and the production of ranges of aids to teaching (to include teachers' guides, textbooks and readers, and audio-visual and other teaching aids) with special reference to an extended experimental programme for introducing a foreign language into the curriculum of primary schools.

For its part, the Ministry was anxious to structure any experiment in such a way as to yield useful information about the feasibility of introducing French into the primary curriculum, in terms both of the training that would be required by the average primary school teacher, and of the implications for primary school teaching—especially its effect on children's attainments in other subjects.

Detailed plans were therefore drawn up, in collaboration with the Nuffield Foundation, for a new form of co-operative, jointly sponsored project, in which the Foundation would undertake

1 'The Teaching of Russian.' Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education and Secretary of State for Scotland in September 1960. H.M.S.O. 3s. 6d.

responsibility for the preparation of a range of teaching materials to be tried out in the experiment—namely an integrated audio-visual course suitable for children beginning to learn French from the age of eight—while the Ministry would take responsibility for approaching local education authorities and inviting them to identify schools willing to participate in such an experiment. The Ministry would also make the necessary provision, partly through the local education authorities, for in-service training in Britain and France for the teachers who would take part.

Why French ?

French was chosen as the language for the experiment for a number of reasons. In the first place, although English has supplanted French as the principal international language, French remains clearly the second most widely used international language; on a more practical level, the proximity of France was clearly an advantage and, however difficult it might be to provide the necessary training for primary and secondary teachers to implement an experiment in French, the difficulties presented by any other language would be greater. Moreover, it was felt that the claims of German, Russian and Spanish would be met, to a considerable extent, by the increased opportunities for learning a second modern language at the secondary stage, which the experiment, if successful, would open up.

On the 13th March, 1963, Sir Edward Boyle, then Minister of Education, announced in Parliament the launching of the scheme. He said that £100,000[1] had been set aside by the Nuffield Foundation for the development of modern language studies, and that their programme and the Ministry's pilot scheme would go forward side by side with the general expansion of modern language teaching to children at the junior stage, which had already begun in some parts of the country. He looked forward to the time when perhaps all juniors at school within the public system would start to learn a foreign language, and hoped that the pilot scheme would collect information about many important questions which would arise for teachers and administrators if this were to be so.

The aims of the pilot scheme

What are the questions which it is hoped the pilot scheme will answer?

First, it should be stressed that the scheme's aim is not to establish whether or not it is possible to teach French successfully in primary schools. Obviously it is possible. In 1959, 'Primary Education'[2] had stated that the teaching of a modern language was possible with abler pupils in primary schools (basing its opinion on the sporadic teaching that has already taken place), but that conditions were rarely suitable. The chief question was to ascertain on what conditions it would be feasible to contemplate the general introduction of a modern language into the primary school curriculum in terms of the consequences for the pupil, the school and the teacher. The main issues can be posed as follows:

1. Is any substantial gain in mastery of a foreign language achieved by beginning to teach it at 8 instead of 11?
2. Do other aspects of educational and general intellectual development gain or suffer from the introduction of a foreign language in the primary school?
3. What are the organisational, teaching and other problems posed by such an experiment?
4. Are there levels of ability below which the teaching of a foreign language is of dubious value?
5. What methods, incentives and motivations are most effective in fostering learning of a foreign language?

The means of assessment being used to provide answers to these questions are described on pages 11 and 12.

---

1 This sum was later increased.
2 'Primary Education.' Published by H.M.S.O. for the Ministry of Education, 1959 (see page 73 *et seq.*)

Principles of the scheme

(i) *The training of primary school teachers in French*

When planning for the scheme began in 1963, there was very little information indeed about the organisational and training problems which launching it would pose. But it was thought reasonable to suppose from the outset that, given adequate additional training both in French and in up-to-date methods, the average primary school teacher, whose qualifications in French might be limited to a pass at 'O' level, acquired perhaps some years ago, and whose fluency in the language was likely, to start with, to be limited, would be able to teach the early stages well.

Initially it was a matter of guesswork to decide the minimum length of training which would have to be provided to enable such teachers to begin teaching the language to 8-year-olds. In a scheme of this kind, it was important not to take any avoidable risks, and the Steering Committee for the pilot scheme took the view from the beginning that a high standard of preparatory training ought to be recognised as essential for the teachers in the scheme.

This training is described in detail on pages 7 and 8. It consists, briefly, of a minimum of six months' attendance at a part-time language refresher course organised locally, followed by attendance at a three-month intensive language course in France or Britain, and finally attendance at a short course on methods of presenting the language to junior pupils. Continued attendance at the local part-time language course *after* completing the three stage training just described has been found to be advantageous; and for many teachers, success or difficulty in coping with junior classes in their third year of French especially may well depend on the regularity with which they have kept up their French in this way.

(ii) *Additional training for secondary teachers*

It was envisaged from the start that teachers in secondary schools receiving pupils for the first time with three years' experience of French would themselves need help to meet the new situation, through the provision of suitable courses; and that those secondary schools which did not already teach a modern language would need help in finding, and perhaps training or retraining, some staff. These points are discussed on page 8.

(iii) *Primary—secondary continuity*

It was considered essential from the outset to regard the pilot scheme as continuing for at least five years—i.e. until the children who had started to learn the language at eight had completed their second year in secondary schools. This was, first, because the teachers in the secondary schools would be faced with a completely new situation; and second, because there was very little material available suitable for 11-year-old pupils who had already had as much as three years' experience of French. It was therefore stipulated from the start that pupils entering secondary schools from primary schools in the pilot scheme must be taught separately from beginners in French.

The need for continuity into the secondary stage was important in determining the criteria for selecting the pilot areas, and is equally relevant in any other scheme. It is very important that the pupils from primary schools where French is taught should not be dispersed over a large number of secondary schools, each of which would be receiving only small groups of pupils for whom it could scarcely hope to make proper arrangements. In the pilot scheme, therefore, when local authorities were asked to identify groups of schools interested in taking part in the scheme, it was emphasised that these areas should be compact, in the sense that the primary schools in them fed a small number of secondary schools, ideally not more than one or two, but generally about five. (In fact about 60 secondary schools will be involved in the experiment's secondary stage in the thirteen pilot areas.)

(iv) *A common starting age in the primary schools*

For similar reasons, it was fundamental that all the pupils taking part, at least in a given area, should start French at the same age. There was, and still is, some uncertainty what the most desirable starting point should be. While there are sound arguments in favour of introducing a language as early as possible to young children, starting a language at the infant stage means training even more teachers than doing so at the junior stage. The choice of eight rather than seven for the starting point for the scheme was based on the belief that it would be desirable to give children a chance to settle down to junior school life before starting to learn French. A start at eight would establish clearly enough for the purposes of the experiment whether or not an earlier start provided identifiable advantages over starting at 11.

What it was emphatically hoped to avoid was the practice, which up to the launching of the scheme was becoming increasingly common, of the occasional introduction of a little French to selected pupils in their last primary year, particularly after they had taken the 11-plus examination. Such haphazard teaching of French adds to the difficulties of the secondary teachers who take on the responsibility for the pupils' French later on, without materially adding to the pupils' knowledge of the language.

(v) *The integration of French into the primary curriculum*

At first there was some anxiety whether language learning might have a harmful effect upon the child-centred approach to primary education favoured by most educationists. This fear was linked to the supposition, initially widespread, that French would only be feasible in the primary school if it were taught by specialist teachers—and that the average primary school teacher was not, and could not be, adequately trained to do the work.

This question has been tackled in two ways. While it was considered that there would be many advantages if the French teacher was also the class teacher, it was also recognised that it would be possible to achieve this only in a few areas. Therefore training was provided for the primary school teachers participating in the scheme on the basis of ensuring one trained teacher of French for each stream or form entry of pupils in a school. This would mean that, when children in the second, third and fourth year of the junior school were learning French, the teacher of French would, at the most, have to be absent from his own class for two classes during the day to teach French to other classes. Similarly, in order to apply this principle as far as possible to the small schools which would have to use peripatetic teachers for French, it was recommended that no peripatetic teacher ought to serve more than two, or at the most three, schools.

Secondly, it was emphasised from the start that French should as far as possible be a fully integrated part of the primary curriculum—that is to say, connections should be made wherever possible with other subjects such as craft, art, history and so on, and the teachers, encouraged to use the same active methods as are used for other subjects.

The preparation by the Nuffield Foundation of audio-visual teaching materials specially designed for young children has of course greatly assisted in this respect.

Course materials

It was fundamental to the whole conception of the experiment that instruction should be based largely on audio-visual methods. Naturally, there has been no intention of setting out to confine the able bilingual teacher from using whatever methods he chooses, provided they are consistent with good primary teaching method. But it was equally obvious that the great majority of British primary school teachers would welcome the help of a specially designed course, based on audio-visual methods, especially if supplemented by fairly full notes in the form of a teacher's guide.

It was to meet this need that the Nuffield Foundation established the Foreign Language Teaching

Materials Project, under the direction of Mr. A. Spicer, at that time lecturer in the Department of Phonetics at Leeds University. The aim was to prepare an integrated range of teaching materials for an introductory course in French, suitable for children starting to learn the language at the age of about eight, and continuing for at least five years. For this purpose, Mr. Spicer has been assisted by a team consisting of practising teachers (seconded full time for this purpose), French native speakers, artists and other assistants. The Project is now responsible also for the preparation of introductory courses in Spanish, Russian and German, for pupils starting these languages at the age of about 11.

The structure of the pilot scheme has provided a suitable opportunity for the thorough trial of the Nuffield primary French language materials, in a wide variety of conditions. The procedure adopted has been to pre-test the materials in about fifty volunteer schools (including some in Scotland) and then to submit the materials, revised in the light of the teachers' comments, to a large scale test in the schools of the pilot areas. After further revision in the light of the feedback from these schools, a 'near-printed' version has been prepared and made available in the associate areas of the pilot scheme. A final version is then prepared for publication.[1]

Teachers and authorities were however free to choose teaching material other than the Nuffield course, if they preferred to do so. Some areas in the scheme, for instance the schools in Oxford, have themselves carried out an experiment within the experiment, using, in different schools, a number of different courses, and making their own assessment of their advantages and disadvantages. Overall, 80 per cent of the schools in the pilot areas are using the Nuffield materials, the next most commonly used materials being the French-produced audio-visual course 'Bonjour, Line' and the U.S.-produced teaching-film series 'Parlons Francais'.

The approach to the language in the Nuffield course is predominantly oral, the language being regarded first and foremost as a means of communication. The course materials include flannelgraph and figurines, flash cards, wall charts, tapes and a very full teachers' guide, particularly suited to the needs of the non-specialist teacher. Research has been carried out to ensure that the material is linguistically sound and the greatest care is taken to ensure the maximum authenticity e.g. in the use of French speakers for the recordings on tape.

Consultation and liaison

The French section of the Nuffield Modern Language Teaching Materials Project is supported by a Consultative Committee, established by the Foundation for this purpose. The Committee's Chairman is Mr. George Taylor (until 1965 Chief Education Officer of Leeds), who is also the Chairman of the Schools Council's Modern Languages Sub-Committee A, now responsible for the supervision of the pilot scheme.

The members of the Nuffield Consultative Committee are Professor P. D. Strevens (of the University of Essex), Mr. E. Ramsbottom (Headmaster, Norbreck County Junior School, Blackpool), Miss P. Edwin (Headmistress, Coborn School for Girls, London, E.3.—and Chairman of the Schools Council Modern Languages Committee), Mr. R. A. Becher (Assistant Director, Nuffield Foundation), Dr. D. C. Riddy, H.M.I., (Staff Inspector for Modern Languages), Miss E. G. Malloch (Principal of Madeley College of Education). Dr. H. H. Stern (of the Languages Centre, University of Essex) and Mr. W. Cunningham (Staff Inspector for Modern Languages in Scotland); the late Dr. W. L. Presswood (formerly a grammar school headmaster and Honorary Secretary of the Modern Languages Association) was also a member of this Committee until his death in 1965. To ensure the fullest liaison between the Nuffield Teaching Materials Project and the Schools Council, Miss Malloch and Dr. Riddy (as also, formerly, Dr. Presswood) serve also on the Schools Council's Modern Languages Sub-Committee A.

1 'En Avant,' the Nuffield Introductory French course is published by E. J. Arnold and Son, Leeds. Stage IA will be published in July 1966, IB in September and Stage 2 in December 1966. Other Stages will follow, each June and December, until December, 1969.

The Schools Council Modern Languages Sub-Committee A

In 1963, when the scheme was launched, the Schools Council did not of course exist. The Department (or Ministry as it then was) took the initiative by establishing a representative committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. George Taylor. Its members were the Staff Inspector for Primary (Junior) Education (Miss M. E. Nicholls) and the Staff Inspector for Secondary Education and Independent Schools in Wales (Mr. B. E. Thomas), besides the three members mentioned above and the two members of the Curriculum Study Group responsible for detailed supervision of the scheme in the trial areas (H.M.I. Miss N. R. Mulcahy and H.M.I. Mr. J. S. Jones). Further places on the Committee were reserved for primary teachers participating in the pilot scheme.

Following the transfer of sponsorship of the scheme from the Department of Education and Science to the Schools Council (on the latter's establishment in October, 1964) this Steering Committee continued its role as an ad hoc Committee of the Council. Three primary school teachers joined the Committee in the Summer of 1964: Mr. G. Cox of Pontygof Junior Mixed School, Ebbw Vale, Mr. A. C. E. Price of Silkmore Primary School, Stafford, and Mrs. H. E. Lewis of Tangmere Primary School, West Sussex.

The Committee has now been enlarged and integrated into the Schools Council's subject committee structure, as the primary sub-committee of the Modern Languages Committee.

Launching the pilot scheme

To identify the groups of schools which would be called upon to participate in the experiment, most of them using the trial Nuffield materials, the Ministry invited local education authorities in March 1963 to say whether they would like to take part in the pilot scheme. Authorities were told that the aim was to find about nine areas, which would between them give as far as possible a cross-section of educational conditions nationally. The areas should be compact, in the sense that they should comprise primary schools feeding a limited number of secondary schools, and should be of such a size as to generate an annual age group of about 480 children. Authorities were asked also if they were willing to make the necessary arrangements for local in-service training, and to release primary teachers to attend intensive courses.

Selecting the pilot areas

Authorities' reaction to this invitation was enthusiastic. Over half (nearly 80 out of the then 146) indicated interest in the scheme and put forward groups of schools interested in participating either as pilot areas or as associate areas (see page 14). A number of other authorities, while not responding directly to the invitation to participate in the project, took the initiative in organising local schemes of their own.

In the event the number of pilot areas was increased to thirteen. For an objective trial of the feasibility of primary French teaching and of the value of the new Nuffield materials, it was not of course strictly necessary to have anything like such a large sample of schools as even nine areas. But one aim of the experiment was to find out what difficulties arose in areas which, for instance, were short of teachers, or where school staffs were changing very quickly, or where schools were very small. It was also thought that, if there were trial areas in most parts of the country, more teachers would become aware of the existence of the experiment, and perhaps have a chance to observe it at first hand. If it were decided later on to proceed towards a general introduction of French into the primary curriculum, there would then be a solid basis of experience on which to build. At the same time, by extending its scope, more colleges of education and colleges of further education, as well as institutes and departments of education, would be brought into the experiment.

The thirteen pilot areas are listed in the Appendix (page 13). In all there are 125 schools participating, involving an age group of approximately 6,000 children.

Training the primary teachers

In July 1963, the Ministry told the authorities which areas had been chosen as pilot areas and invited their help as a matter of urgency in planning the training required to get the project launched by September 1964. Each area assessed the general standard of qualification in French already possessed by the teachers who would be taking part, and took steps to provide a local part-time language course to help teachers, where this was necessary, to refresh their French and prepare themselves for the three-month intensive course in France.

(i) *Local language courses*

These local part-time courses were organised round a language laboratory, in such secondary schools and colleges of education and further education as already possessed one. Their intensiveness (from about 25 up to 90 hours' preparatory work) varied considerably; as did the materials used to train teachers on these courses. In some areas the basic course used to increase the teachers' linguistic proficiency was 'Voix et Images de France' produced by C.R.E.D.I.F. Several of the course tutors devised additional material of their own to reinforce particular structures or to enlarge vocabulary. Some areas also used the primary course which the majority of the teachers were either using or about to use in their own schools. The purpose here was twofold—to familiarise the teachers with the material and to show them various interesting ways in which the material could be presented to a class.

(ii) *The intensive language courses*

Meanwhile, arrangements had been made for courses of three months' duration to be held, starting in the spring term of 1964, at the British Institute in Paris and at the University of Besançon. The courses were specifically designed to enable the teachers to reach the highest standard of proficiency in spoken French of which they were capable in the time and to improve their knowledge of contemporary France. The centres were asked to provide practice in French conversation on prepared topics in small groups and to ensure that the vocabulary used on the course was such as would be useful to teachers in their classrooms. Special attention was given to poems and children's stories which might be useful as class material. Each of the centres was equipped with a language laboratory; and in addition to talks, language study, work in discussion groups and other activities, the courses provided for a daily period of language laboratory work. Contact with French people outside the classroom was also held to be of great benefit.

(iii) *Courses in method*

When the teachers had returned from these courses, arrangements were made to attend one of three ten-day courses organised and staffed by members of H.M. Inspectorate. The object of these courses was to discuss possible methods of presenting the language to young children and to demonstrate the range of audio-visual language course materials which might be used. Each of the courses drew special attention to the possibilities of integrating French into different parts of the primary curriculum, e.g. through art work, photography, other visual activities, games, songs, etc.

These courses also provided an opportunity for Mr. Spicer, the Organiser of the Nuffield Materials Project Team, to present his trial materials, which had meanwhile been given pre-trial tests in the fifty volunteer schools. The foundation had made careful provision for 'feed-back' from the teachers to the writing team, both through questionnaires to be returned at intervals during the pilot trials, and also by arranging subsequent meetings between the teachers and the writing team, so that teachers' opinions could be fully taken into account during the process of revision.

Later, in the summer of 1965, three additional methods courses were held, under the same directors and with the teachers attending in the same grouping as before. These courses provided an easy and useful way of enabling teachers to share their experience about the difficulties they had encountered and successes they had enjoyed in teaching the language in the first year.[1] Teachers were also able to offer fresh assessments, in the light of their own experience, of the language courses available, and particularly to discuss with Mr. Spicer the first stage of the Nuffield materials.

Training for secondary teachers

In December, 1965, the Council sponsored a conference, held at Torquay under the joint chairmanship of Mr. George Taylor and the Staff Inspector for Modern Languages, Dr. D. C. Riddy, H.M.I., to discuss the implications for the secondary schools of children reaching them with three years' experience of French. This conference concluded that there would be a clear need for courses for secondary school teachers, both to demonstrate new methods of teaching a language (to enable them to follow up the good work done in the primary schools) and, for some teachers, to enable them to improve their fluency in the language itself, especially French. It is expected that both local part-time courses and one-term intensive courses, as for primary teachers, will be provided. It will also be possible to extend the range of these language courses, to cater for other needs, if it appears to be necessary subsequently.

To enable modern language teachers in secondary modern schools to familiarise themselves with the full range of existing audio-visual and similar language courses now available, the Council will provide, in 1966, two courses devoted to demonstrations and discussions of primary and secondary language courses. All the modern language staff of the pilot area secondary schools will, it is hoped, be able to attend these courses. Attention will be given, not only to teaching materials in French, but also in other modern languages, especially Russian, Spanish and German.

Modern language centres

In addition, the Torquay conference strongly recommended that local authorities should provide opportunities for primary and secondary teachers of modern languages to come together to discuss common problems. Obviously it is of great assistance to the secondary teachers to visit the primary schools in their catchment area to see at first hand the type of modern language teaching being provided.

So far, only one or two modern language teachers' centres have been established. Generally, the venue for local courses has been the institution providing the language laboratory for the course, and this is not necessarily a suitable place to establish a teachers' centre. But the need for teachers to have access to a good local library of modern language teaching materials of all kinds will steadily increase, as the pilot scheme progresses. At present, this need is met, in part, by the existence of the Nuffield Foundation's Information Centre, at Leeds. A wide variety of courses, in French and other languages, is displayed there, together with different types of projection equipment etc. The centre is at present being expanded, with the assistance of Leeds LEA and teachers, in groups or individually, are free to visit it by appointment at any time.

But secondary schools participating in the pilot scheme seem likely to feel the need for access to a choice of supplementary material, from a source easily accessible to them. Initially, this need may be met by schools providing their own resources, but the provision of an additional library of material, available at the area teachers' centre, seems likely to be necessary before long.

1 Mutual help by teachers in the various areas of the scheme has also been made possible through the circulation, once a term from autumn, 1964, of a journal called 'Junior French' edited by Mr. A. Davis of Blackbird Leys School, Oxford, with the generous help of the Oxford LEA.

The spread of primary French teaching

From the beginning, provision had been made to associate with the project a number of areas in addition to those chosen as pilot areas. The principles of the scheme would be applied in the associate areas in exactly the same way as the pilot areas, and the same training facilities, on the same financial terms, would be made available to teachers in the associate areas. In addition, one set of the Nuffield Foundation's trial course materials (free to the schools in the pilot areas) was to be provided to each associate area, revised after trial in the pilot schools.

In the summer of 1964, when the organisation and training programme for the pilot areas was established, all the areas which had originally applied for membership of the scheme and had not been selected as pilot areas, were admitted into associate membership. Subsequently, a few other areas also applied to associate groups of schools with the scheme, and by 1965 there were 53 areas in association with it, involving altogether about five per cent of the annual age group. These areas are listed in the Appendix.

To provide intensive language course facilities for teachers from the associate areas, the arrangements which had been made with the centres in France (at Paris and Besançon) were continued. In September, 1964, a similar course was started in London[1] at the Holborn College of Law, Languages and Commerce, primarily for the benefit of teachers unable to go to France, but also, to provide information about the usefulness of such a course as a substitute for the French ones. Altogether, these three centres provided courses for 360 primary teachers from January 1964 to July 1965, and it is likely that about 240 teachers (mainly from the associate areas) will have attended them in the academic year 1965/66. The pilot areas have also been provided with further places on these courses, to make good losses amongst their own primary teachers trained for the scheme, due to marriage, transfer, promotion, etc.

Up to 1st January 1966, each pilot area had seconded an average of 15 teachers for training on the intensive courses, and each associated area had seconded five. (Each pilot area contains about 12 primary schools.)

Surveying the national situation

During 1964, it became clear that the existence of the pilot project had been interpreted by some authorities and teachers as an encouragement to launch local experiments; and individual primary schools were continuing to introduce French for one, two or three terms at the end of the fourth year, without reference to the relevant secondary schools or full consideration of the effect on pupils' later education. The Chairman of the Steering Committee, Mr. George Taylor, accordingly wrote to all authorities in May, 1964, pointing out that the pilot project itself constituted an investigation into the feasibility of primary French teaching on a large scale, and that its results would be published as soon as they became available. The Committee did not suggest that experiments should be confined to the pilot areas of the project, but they drew the attention of the local education authorities to the principles on which the pilot scheme was based, and to the fundamental importance of adequate planning, preparation and supervision before the start was made.

Complaints from secondary teachers of modern languages about the dangers of unco-ordinated primary experimentation, and the intermittent nature of language teaching in some primary schools, continued to occur. Following the establishment of the Schools Council in October 1964, an assessment was made, based on information supplied by local education authorities, of the extent of primary French teaching in the country as a whole. Although the information collected was not complete, the return showed that in 119 local education authority areas, there were nearly 5,000 primary teachers teaching French, 1,600 of them in schools in the pilot areas or associate areas or

[1] A further course will be started at Leeds College of Commerce from September, 1966.

schemes locally organised by local education authorities, and about 3,300 in schools which were not co-ordinated in any scheme at all. In terms of schools, the survey showed that 21 per cent of the 14,000 schools in the areas involved, were providing primary French of some kind.

The survey also showed that French was not being taught in any primary school in 15 local education authority areas, and that 72 per cent of the LEAs who responded were providing local refresher language courses for some of their teachers. Similarly, although there were many schools introducing French in the fourth year of the junior school, many more were introducing it in either the second or third or even the first year.

This survey did not attempt any assessment of the quality of language teaching being provided. It did however collect information about the teachers in French. Rather more than 50 per cent of them had only an 'O' level qualification in French, and about one quarter an 'A' level qualification. Nearly a quarter had resided in France for more than one month continuously, and well over a half appeared either to have attended a local language refresher course or to be attending one.

The Council had inferred from this information that the quality of much French teaching outside the pilot scheme or local schemes must leave something to be desired, and it was proposed to make it possible for all authorities, whether in the scheme so far or not, to associate groups of schools with the pilot scheme, provided that the principles laid down for the scheme were followed in the schools concerned. An invitation to this effect was issued by the Council to local education authorities in June, 1966.

The situation today

(i) *The pilot areas*

The teaching of French to all the 8-year-olds in the pilot schools in the pilot areas began in September 1964. After a year and a half's operation, the project seems to be going well. Most teachers have the impression that the addition of French to the curriculum has had a highly beneficial effect on children's attitudes to other subjects, and that this is not simply due to the novelty of learning French. In some schools, teachers have reservations about the wisdom of including the least able children amongst those learning French, but the pilot scheme principle that children of all abilities should be included until a general assessment has been made of their performance is being adhered to.

As stated earlier, eighty per cent of the teachers in the pilot schools are using the trial Nuffield materials. Others are using 'Bonjour, Line', 'Parlons Français' and other materials (some of them their own), and 2.5 per cent are not using any commercially prepared materials at all, these being mainly the bilingual teachers. Many of the schools are now reaching the critical stage where writing is introduced, it having been a rule generally observed by all the pilot schools that writing should not be tackled during the first year of teaching.

The provision of properly trained teachers continues to be a problem for many of the authorities. Most pilot areas are continuing to send about five teachers a year on intensive courses to ensure that they have staff available to guarantee continuity of teaching to the end of 1967/68, when the second (and final) wave of children being studied in the scheme will move on to their secondary schools. (The schools will of course continue to provide French subsequently.)

While it is clear to any visitor to the pilot schools that the attainment in French and enjoyment of it by most of the children are already considerable, some statistical results about their attainment in it should be available in 1968, based on three years' learning of the language by the children in the first wave, and of two years' learning of it by children in the second wave. These results will be provided by the National Foundation for Educational Research, who are carrying out an intensive and thorough evaluation of the project. The Foundation will be producing a final report

at the conclusion of five years' learning of the language by each of the two waves of children, in about 1971. The Foundation will also be paying particular attention to the question whether the less able children should continue to be included in the project, and they will be the subject of a special study in the testing to be carried out in 1966.

(ii) *The associate areas*

Some of the schools in the associate areas are following one year behind the pilot area programme, and some two years. Although these areas are adhering closely to the principles of the scheme, there are instances where certain departures have been made. The Council hopes to continue to provide information to these areas on tackling the problems raised by the introduction of French in the primary school, derived from its experience in the pilot areas.

Advice about the organisation of courses in primary language teaching methods was provided at a conference, organised by the Council at Harrogate in February 1965, which was attended by representatives from nearly all the associate areas. This conference explained the principles on which the methods courses for the teachers in the pilot areas had been organised the year before, and the Council's staff provided help to the associate area representatives in arranging between themselves to provide similar courses on a regional basis during 1965 and 1966. So far, 14 such courses have been run on a regional basis, involving teachers from 42 authorities.

The need to provide them, of course, continues. A short account of the Harrogate conference is therefore included in the Council's *Working Paper No.* 8, 'French in the Primary School', which is being published very shortly. This *Working Paper* gives fuller details of the project, with additional information for the modern languages specialist.

Similarly, the Council will be arranging for representatives of areas associated with the scheme to come together to discuss the implications for secondary schools, and to examine the conclusions reached at the Torquay conference on these questions.

(iii) *Local schemes*

It is not known exactly how many local schemes are in operation, but in addition to the few authorities, such as Leeds and East Ham, who were running schemes of their own before the pilot scheme was introduced in 1963, a considerable number of authorities decided in 1963 to set up their own schemes. Such evidence as has been obtained suggests that these are variable in quality and that consolidation on the lines described would be beneficial in some cases.

In some of these areas, the secondary schools have already begun to receive pupils from primary schools taking part in improvised schemes. By contrast with most of the pilot areas, these schools often find themselves receiving pupils from a range of primary schools with widely varying lengths of course and practices in French teaching. In these areas there is a clear need for direct consultation between secondary and primary teachers, with the collaboration of the local authority.

Looking to the future

There are, altogether, three appraisals of the pilot scheme in process. First, the statistical evaluation of the pupils' attainments in the language is being carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research. As has been mentioned, this will lead to the production of an interim report in 1968, and a final report about 1971. It will set out to answer the questions mentioned at the beginning about the broad general effects of teaching French in primary schools, and provide proper evidence on which to base a decision for the future.

At the same time, members of H.M. Inspectorate are making a general appraisal of the scheme. Some of them are scrutinising it from the language point of view, and others are making a general

assessment of its impact on the class, the teacher, and the school. These opinions are being collected and will be analysed by the National Foundation as a supplement to its own report.

Finally, everyone taking part in the experiment, or coming into contact with it, will be making his own informal assessment. This means not only children and teachers, but parents, who are already displaying a keen interest in its progress. The pace at which the experiment has developed since it was introduced in 1963 can be partly attributed to the factors described in the first section of this report, but a great deal can perhaps be explained in terms of a growing feeling among parents and teachers that language learning is a need in our society and that it can make a contribution to a child's educational and psychological development, if the teaching is conceived in the right way.

It may seem that this is now so obvious that there is no need to continue to treat the teaching of primary French as a matter for experiment. But the pilot scheme was not set up to determine whether French can be introduced into the primary curriculum, but to find out the profit and loss of doing so. So far, it seems that the omens are good, and that the profit is likely to outweigh the loss. But we are still in the early stages, and at this stage we must be prepared to discount some of its success as attributable to novelty. The Council feels therefore that, at present, the aim should be to consolidate the teaching of French where a start has already been made, and not to extend it further without careful thought and without ensuring that the principles described in this report can be followed. The time for deciding whether a general advance should be made toward introducing French into all our primary schools will come when the results of the formal evaluation are available, and future plans can be made based on the lessons that have been learnt.

APPENDIX

THE PILOT AREAS AND THE ASSOCIATE AREAS OF THE PILOT SCHEME, MAY 1966

Pilot Areas

Bedfordshire (N.E. Beds.)
Blackpool
Devon (Plympton and Plymstock)
Dorset (Bridport and environs)
Durham
Hillingdon (Ruislip and Uxbridge)
Hull
Monmouthshire (Ebbw Vale)
Northumberland (Blyth)
Nottingham
Oxford
Staffordshire (Stafford)
West Sussex (Chichester and environs)

Associate Areas

Barrow (part)
Berkshire (Woodley area)
Birmingham (part)
Blackburn (part)
Bradford (part)
Brighton (part)
Bristol (part)
Cheshire (Bromborough and Alsager area)
Croydon (New Addington area)
Cumberland (Whitehaven)
Darlington (part)
Derbyshire (Chesterfield)
Devon (Torquay)
Doncaster (part)
East Suffolk (parts)
East Sussex (Newhaven, Bexhill and East Grinstead)
Essex (Harlow)
Exeter (part)
Gloucester (part)
Gloucestershire (Brockworth area)
Hastings (part)
Havering (Hornchurch)
Herefordshire (Hereford City)
Isle of Wight (Sandown/Shanklin and surrounding area)
Kent (Strood area)
Lancashire (Urmston area)
Leicester (part)
Leicestershire (Oadby and Thurnby area)
Lincoln (part)
Lincolnshire (Lindsey) (part)
Liverpool (part)
London (parts)
Middlesbrough (part)
Newcastle upon Tyne (part)
Newham (part)
Northampton (part)
Nottinghamshire (Ollerton area)
Oldham (part)
Plymouth (Whitleigh area)
Reading (Tilehurst area)
Somerset (Weston-super-Mare)
Southend-on-Sea (Leigh-on-Sea area)
South Shields (part)
Sunderland (part)
Surrey (Guildford)
Tynemouth (part)
Warley (part)
Warwickshire (Rugby)
Wakefield (part)
Wolverhampton (part)
Worcester (part)
York (part)
Yorkshire (East Riding) (Bridlington area)

Printed for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by McCorquodale & Co. Ltd.
HM Dd 158165 100M 8/66 (3309)